THE BRIDGE AT BORIM

Surekha Panandikar

Illustrations: Shashi Shetye

THE BRIDGE AT BORIM

THE BRIDGE
AT BORIM

Nehru Bal Pustakalaya

THE BRIDGE AT BORIM

Surekha Panandikar

Illustrations
Shashi Shetye

nbt.india
एकः सूते सकलम्
NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA

ISBN 978-81-237-2687-8

First Edition 1999
Reprints 2001, 2009, 2014 (*Saka* 1935)

© Surekha Panandikar, 1999

₹ 30.00

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India
Nehru Bhawan, 5 Institutional Area, Phase-II
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110 070

Website: www.nbtindia.gov.in

Contents

1.	His Treasure	7
2.	An Incident at the Beach	13
3.	Wish Fulfilled	20
4.	At the Carnival	28
5.	One More Dream	39
6.	Clever Fox	50
7.	The Secret Plan	59
8.	Freedom at Last!	68

HIS TREASURE

"Ah, I caught you at last!" Joze shouted. He was about to break the shell when he heard somebody saying, *"Naka Naka; Todu Naka."* A tall man came near him. He was so tall that Joze had to crane his neck to see his face. The man smiled at him and said, "Little chedo, don't break the shell. That is a little crab's house. See how beautiful it is!" Joze noticed it's beauty. The man showed him some shells which he had collected that morning. He described those beautiful shells as if they were living creatures. Joze was amazed at his knowledge.

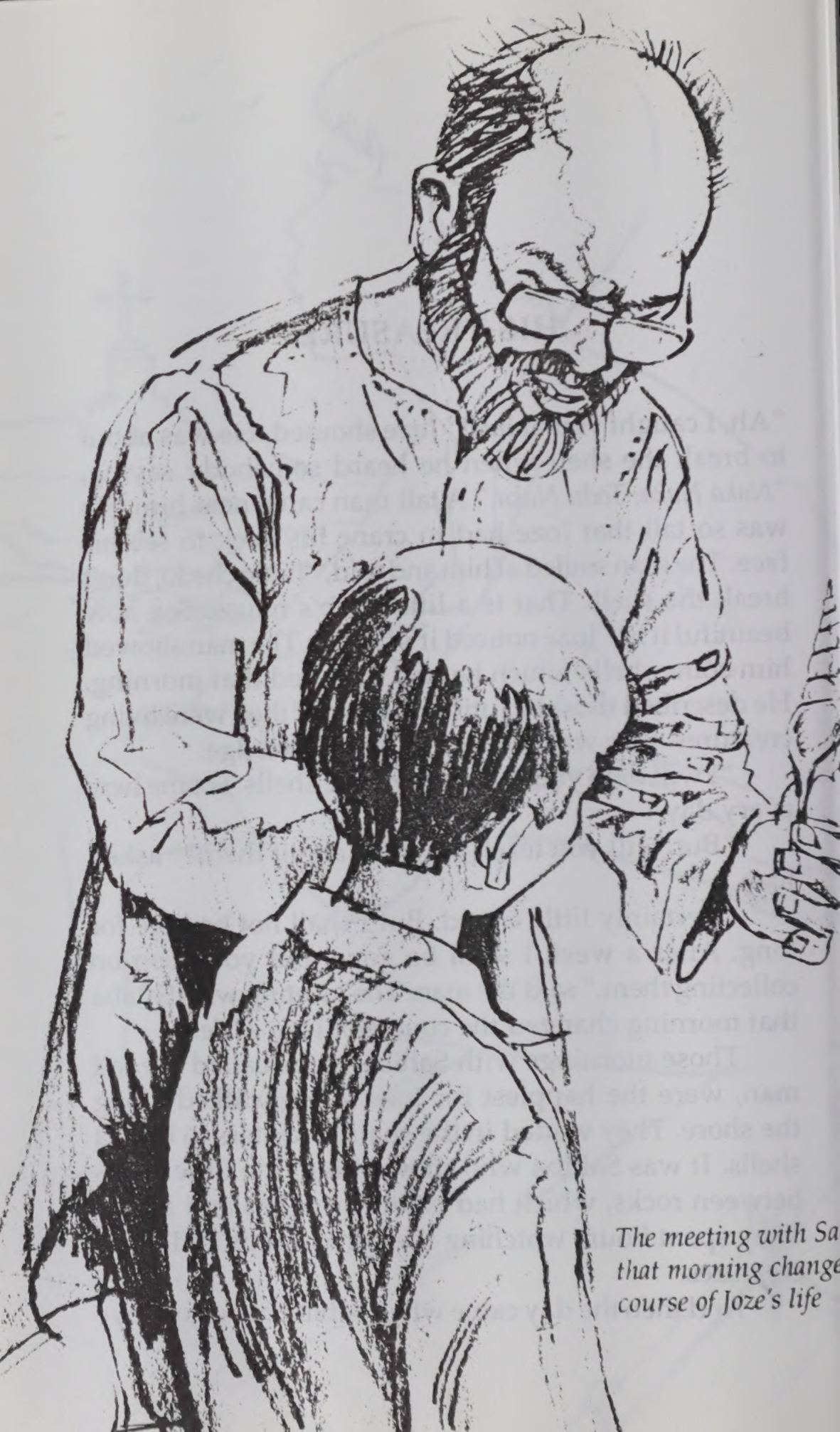
"I will help you in collecting the shells. I come here every day."

"But, will you teach me more about them?" asked Joze.

"Certainly little friend. But I shall not be here for long. After a week I shall be gone. But you keep on collecting them," said the man. The meeting with Sahiba that morning changed the course of Joze's life.

Those mornings with Sahiba, as he called the tall man, were the happiest for Joze. They walked along the shore. They waded in the shallow waters to collect shells. It was Sahiba who showed him the little pools between rocks, which had colourful fishes and shells. They spent hours watching the fishes, crabs and other creatures.

And then the day came when Sahiba bade goodbye



The meeting with Sa
that morning change
course of Joze's life

to him. Joze could not control his tears. Sahiba consoled him with a promise to come back to see his collection. He gave him a 'dog whalk' as a gift to start his collection.

Everyday Joze would hunt for those jewels of the sea. He would walk along the beach every morning and evening, his sharp eyes looking for those beautiful shells, conches, feathers and colourful trinkets. He spent many a happy time collecting, cleaning and storing them away in his secret treasure house.

Joze's treasure house was a discarded old boat on the far end of the beach. He kept all his treasure there for he was sure his '*Mai*' would not allow him to keep them at home. Maria, Joze's mother, was very particular about keeping their little hut clean and tidy. She threw away anything that she thought would make the place untidy.

One day Joze came early to the sea shore. He wanted to see his latest collection, the beautiful star fish which he had found last evening in one of the crevices of the rocks. He ran to the boat, climbed in, and removed the plank. There it was! His beautiful star fish glowing among the shells! He looked at his collection proudly. There were many cockles, large and small, shallow and deep, ivory white, and lily pink. Some had black stripes on them. He had picked some from the shore and some he had found buried under the sand.

He felt one of the conch winking at him. He picked it up. There was a tiny little creature in it, probably a small crab. This shell was one of his favourites. Another shell which he adored was 'dog whalk'. It's zigzag opening resembled a dog's open jaws with the teeth showing. Whenever he looked at the 'dog whalk', he remembered Sahiba. Remembering his friend Sahiba, Joze picked up a big conch and put it to his ears. He

heard the sound of the sea waves.

So engrossed was he that he didn't hear his mother calling "Joze, O Joze! Where are you? O God! How and where do I find this crazy *chedo* of mine?"

Suddenly he felt a jerk as somebody was trying to look under the boat in which he was inspecting his treasure. Joze ducked in and sprawled on his treasure.

"Maria, he is not here," he heard Francis.

Joze lay still, holding his breath lest he should be found out.

After a while when he was sure that Francis and others had gone, Joze covered his treasure with a wooden plank. He walked back to where Francis, Falero, Maria, Julie and others were waiting for the fishing boats to return. Joze joined them quietly. But Maria spotted him and asked angrily, "where were you crazy kid?"

"Here on the beach only," Joze replied.

Before Maria could probe further, others shouted '*Ailo, Ailo*' (they have come). Everybody rushed to unload the 'catch' of the day. There was the usual swift activity and shouts of 'wait man', 'catch man'. In half an hour the young and the old started disentangling fish from the net. Women got busy sorting and arranging them in baskets.

Joze helped his parents. Some fish were still alive. They jumped to escape. Joze felt sorry when those lively shining creatures were grabbed back to the basket.

"Pedro, what fish did you get? Sardines, Bangda and many sword fishes?" asked Francis.

"No my friend, only three big fish, rest of them are all small variety," Pedro replied.

"Come Maria, come quick. We must reach the market in time, otherwise those clever women from

So engrossed was he that
he didn't hear
his mother calling

other villages will grab all the rich customers." A mad rush followed as women started to pick up the baskets of fish on their heads. They were in a hurry to reach the market. Maria too started for the market carrying her basket on her head. Joze followed her.

AN INCIDENT AT THE BEACH

One Sunday morning Joze, as usual, had come to the beach in search of his treasure. The beach was rather noisy with lots of school kids. Joze forgot about his shells. He stood there admiring the kids dressed smartly in their neat school uniforms. They carried their tiffin boxes and colourful water bottles.

Some were singing songs, while others were playing with a big rubber ball. Suddenly one of the boys noticed Joze dressed just in a loin cloth absorbed in watching and listening to the song. He drew the attention of the other players to him.

"Eh Gopu, look at that naked fellow. He is not even ashamed," exclaimed Subash, the boy who had noticed him first.

"Nangu" "Nangu." They all shouted and giggled.

Joze's attention was drawn to them. He looked at them. They all made faces at him. Joze felt hurt, turned his face and continued watching the singing group.

"What does he think of himself?" Subhash said,

"He is ignoring us," Raju exclaimed.

"Let us teach him a lesson," Ashok suggested.

"Yes, Yes let's teach him a lesson," all said in chorus.

Subhash signalled Raju to throw the ball at Joze. The ball missed Joze, but landed near him. He picked it up and went to return it to the boys. They all giggled and shouted "Nangu-pangu shame, shame." Gopu

snatched the ball from him and pushed him. Joze stumbled and fell down. The boys laughed. Joze felt very hurt. He ran from there and sat on the abandoned fishing boat lying on the beach a little distance away. Suddenly he heard the boys crying "Help, help!" He ran towards them. He saw that the boy who had snatched the ball from him earlier, was slipping towards the deeper waters of the sea because of the sand shifting under his feet. He was drifting away and other boys were too scared to help him. They were shouting and crying, "Gopu is drowning! Gopu is drowning! Didi, Didi!"

"That big wave which is coming would surely wash him away," thought Joze who never had any fear of the sea. He immediately plunged into the water and held Gopu tightly. He rode on the waves with Gopu. When the waves subsided, he dragged Gopu towards the shore. As he knew the ways of the waves, he managed to avoid the big leaping ones and brought Gopu to safety. By that time their teacher Shyama Didi and other people had gathered there. Shyama Didi took charge of Gopu. One person from the crowd came forward. He put Gopu on his stomach, and pressed his back. Gopu coughed out lots of water.

"He is alright now. Dry him." The man suggested. Didi asked other teachers to rub him dry.

"Thank God!" Didi said. Everyone sighed with relief. They shuddered when Didi said "Just think, what would have happened if that little boy had not saved him. But where is he?," Didi asked looking around.

She saw Joze's back as he was walking away.

"Wait, little hero! Please wait," Didi called and ran behind him.

"Please come. We must thank you." Didi put her

Joze brought Gopal to safety

hand around him and brought him to the other children and Gopu who was recovering.

She took Joze's hand in hers and said "Thank you, little one! You are really a brave boy! Today you have saved not only Gopal but all of us from a tragic accident." She hugged him and asked,

"What's your name?"

"Joze," replied Joze in a small voice.

"Joze, its a sweet name for a sweet brave boy."

"Where do you live, Joze?" enquired Didi.

"Over there, in those little huts near the church." Joze pointed out.

"Which school do you go to, Joze?" asked little Usha.

"No. I don't go to school." Joze replied.

"Why not? Don't you like school?" Usha asked.

"No, I do like to go to school. But Mai and Pai have no money to send me to a big nice school at Margao where Sumi and her brother study," said Joze sadly.

"Why go to Margao? We have a school here in Banavali now. All these children study in that school here. I teach them. Would you like to come to our school?" asked Shyama Didi.

"Really, will you take me?" asked Joze eagerly.

"But... no... I can't. My Pai will not allow me", he said again. "My Pai has no money to pay the fees, I do not have nice clothes like them, nor books and a slate," said Joze sadly. He looked very disappointed.

"Don't worry about that. If you want to come, I will make all the arrangements and get permission from your Pai. Come Joze, Let us go to your Pai and take his permission, then you can study and play with Gopu whom you have saved and with all these boys." Shyama Didi got up.

"No, not with these boys. I will not study or play with these boys," Joze tried to free his hand from Didi's clasp.

"Why not? Don't you like them?" She asked.

"No, I don't. They teased me. They called me, *Nangu Pangu* and snatched the ball from my hand when I went to give it to them. They even pushed me and called me names. No I will not study with them," said Joze in choked voice.

"Is it true Subhash?" Didi asked turning towards the boys. The boys bent their heads in shame.

"I am asking you Subhash, is it true?" Shyama Didi raised her voice when Subhash didn't reply. Subhash nodded.

"How bad of you! You should be ashamed. Look what a nice and brave boy Joze is! He saved your little cousin Gopu even though he snatched the ball from him. You teased him and misbehaved with him. Come and apologize and request him to join our school." Didi told Subhash.

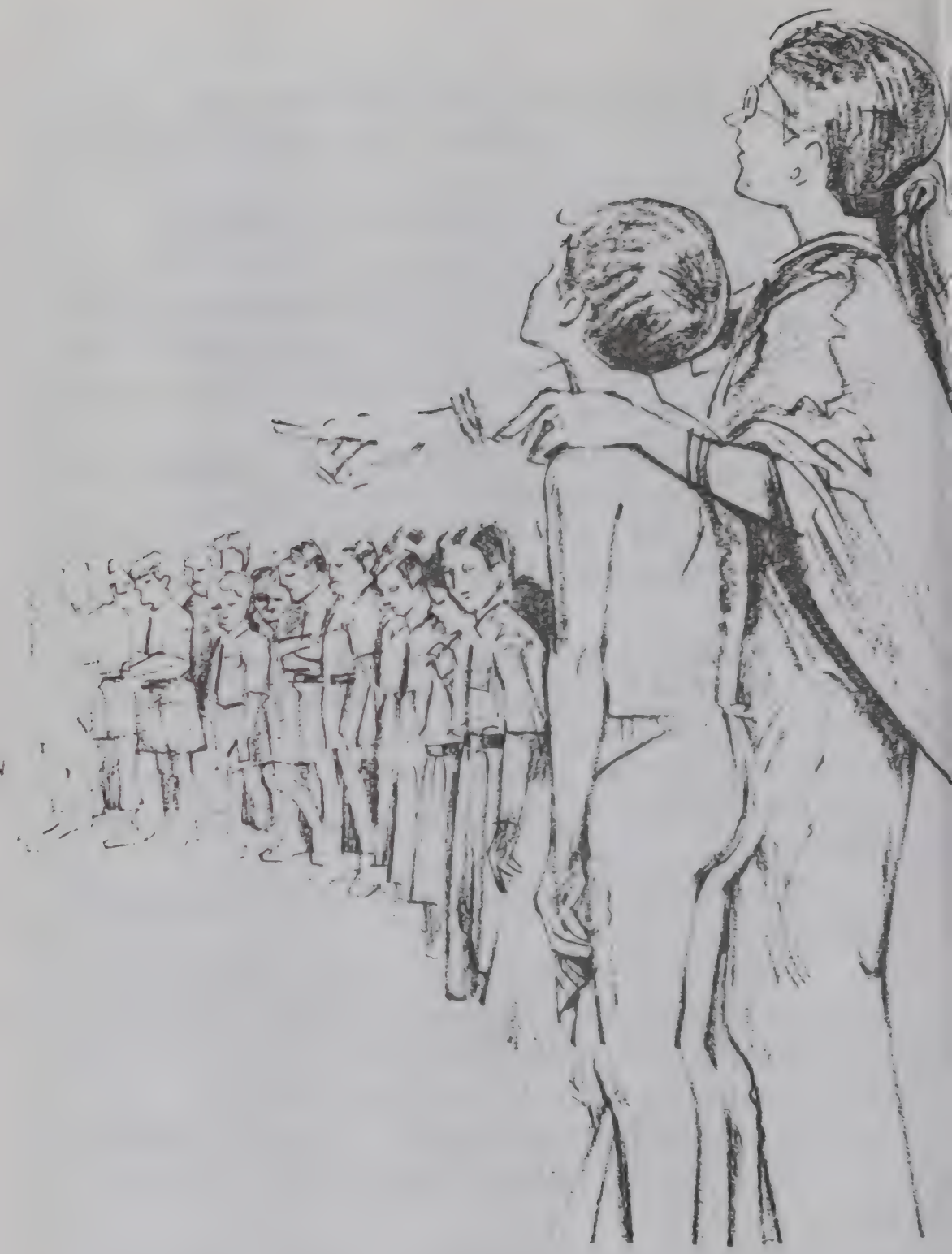
"Yes, Yes, You must do as Didi tells," shouted other children.

"Come on boys, say sorry," other teachers also joined in. Subhash, Raju, Ashok, Deepak all went to Joze, "We are sorry Joze, please come to our school. We will not tease you any more. We will play with you."

"Please Joze come to our school," said little Deepa.

"Joze come to our school. We want Joze," all of them started in chorus.

Gopu who had realised by then that Joze had saved him, managed to get up. He was feeling dizzy, but slowly he walked up to Joze, "I don't know how to thank you, Joze. I am really grateful to you. Forgive me for my rude behaviour. Please come to our school," he



The boys bent their heads in shame

pleaded taking Joze's hand in his.

"I would like to, but I don't know whether my parents will allow me," said Joze.

Joze was not sure because he knew his parents had no money. Secondly, nobody from his neighbourhood had ever been to school. Boys played and helped to assort fish, till they were big enough to go to the sea. Girls learnt household chores. They also accompanied their mothers to the market and took to selling fish. "How will I ever go to school then?" Joze was wondering. But when Didi said, "Let us go to your Mai and Pai to get their permission," little Joze had no option. He led them to his parents who were busy sorting the day's catch.

WISH FULFILLED

When Joze's parents saw the procession of children coming along with Joze, they were alarmed. "O! Jesus! What has our Joze done?" exclaimed Maria with her hands on her bosom. Both of them thought that Joze must have done something wrong and children were coming to complain about him.

"Joze, what did you do? Why are all they here?" Maria asked as soon as the children arrived. "Oh! God, how many times have I told you to keep away from the school," Maria shook Joze.

"Please listen. Joze has not done anything wrong," said Didi.

"Then why are you all here? I know my child. All the time dreaming about school, standing near the school gate, and imagining himself with school books. Oh! God..." Maria went on and on.

"Will you please keep quiet?" Shouted Joze's father, Pedro. "Please pardon her and tell us why all of you are here." Pedro requested.

"Your little son is really a brave boy. You both have brought him up so well. Today he saved Gopu from death even when he had misbehaved with him," said Didi.

"That's good, but what did he do to save him?" Pedro wanted to know.

"I don't know the details. I think Joze should tell.

Come on Joze," Didi requested.

When Joze didn't speak, Subhash came forward. "We were playing with the ball. Raju threw the ball to Gopu. Gopu couldn't catch it. The ball fell into the sea.

"Raju then called out to Gopu to get the ball. Gopu refused. We had an argument. By then the ball had drifted quite far in the sea. Gopu was annoyed and ran into the waters. He stretched to catch the ball. A big wave came and Gopu fell down.

"We were all scared. None of us knew swimming. We started shouting. Just then we saw Joze running into the water. In no time he caught Gopu." Subhash narrated the incident.

"Then...?" Asked Maria.

"Joze, you better tell now." Subhash requested.

"Come on *chedo,*" Pedro coaxed.

"As I caught him, a big wave came on and I rode on just as we do Pai, and I dragged him along. The second wave was not that big. So I let it pass. But then the big wave followed and I jumped on it. More waves followed. I was finding it difficult to ride them with Gopu. Gopu's weight had increased as his clothes, and shoes were wet. Fortunately no big wave came and I managed to drag him along to the shore." Joze completed.

"Thank our Lord Jesus." Maria made the sign of cross, knelt down and prayed. "Bless my brave little *chedo,*" she said and kissed Joze. The boy felt embarrassed.

Didi asked "Will you send Joze to our school?"

"How I wish we could send him to your school, dear madam, but we are really helpless. We can't afford the fees and other expenses." Pedro explained his difficulties.

"Don't worry about it. In our school we do teach some children free and give them scholarships for other expenses. I am sure the trustees of the school will agree to give free education and scholarships to Joze." Didi said assuringly.

And Joze joined Didi's school.

The school did not change Joze's life. He kept going to the sea in the early morning. Before his father came with the day's catch, he would collect conches, shells etc. Later he helped his mother assort the fish. After that, instead of going to the market with his mother, he would go home with his father, and get ready for school.

Though the name of the school was 'New Era School' it was called Didi's school as she was its most popular and loved teacher. In the beginning Joze felt a little out of place because other boys and girls came from well-to-do families. They were dressed in uniforms made of nice cloth and carried small leather school bags and coloured water-bottles hanging from their shoulders.

"Look, he doesn't have a water bottle!" Renu exclaimed when she saw Joze drinking water from the tap.

"He carries his books in a cotton bag. Why can't he get a bag like ours from the market?" Neeta asked.

"O, because he is poor. His father catches fish and doesn't go to office," little Asha reasoned. Joze felt sad.

"But he swims well. He saved our Gopu. Joze is very nice, and brave boy. I like him very much." Geetu proclaimed in her Kid language and went to Joze and gave him a toffee.

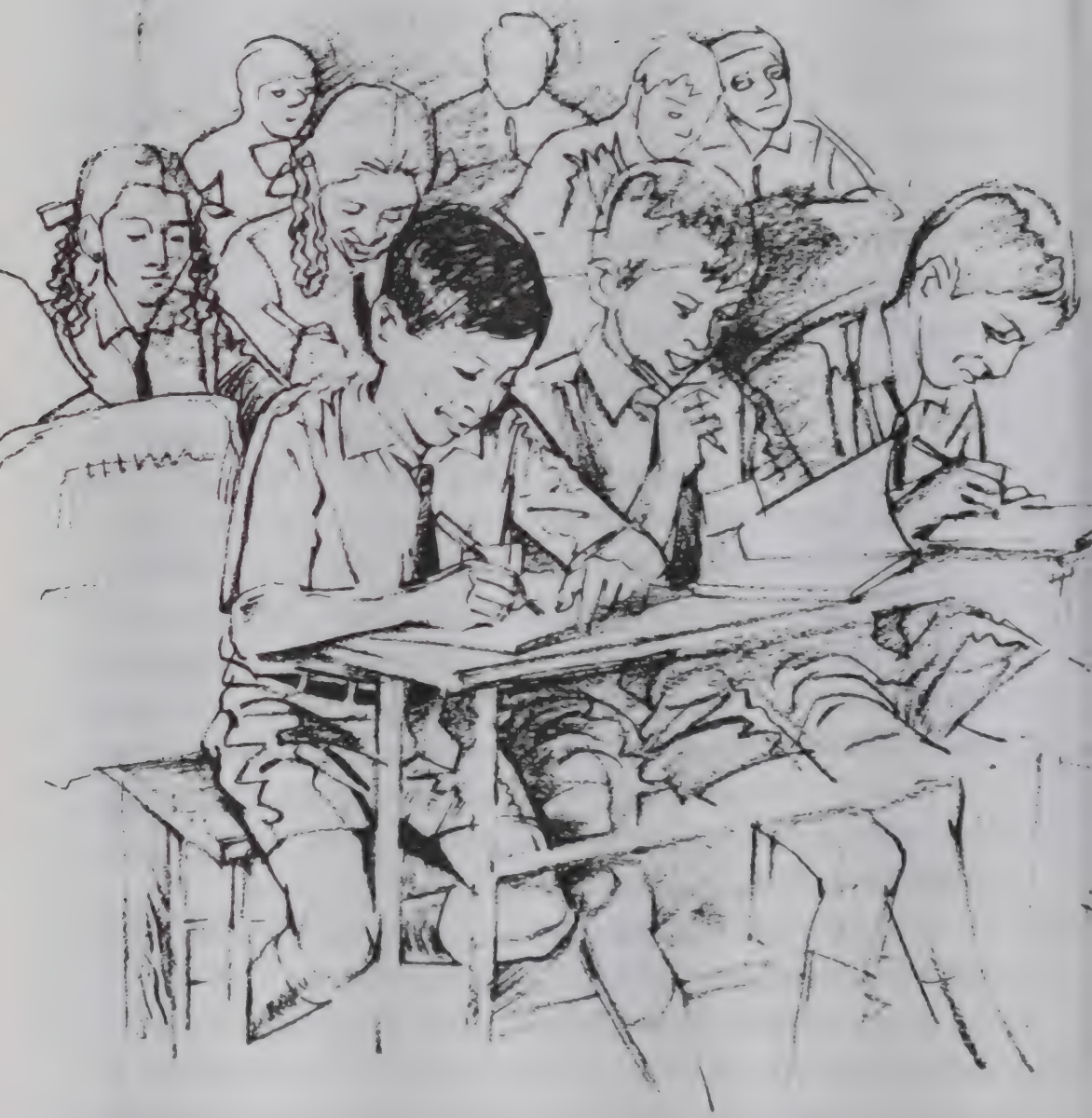
"Thank you Geetu, you too are a very nice girl," Joze told her. In the beginning Joze could not understand much of what they said, although Joze picked up

their language soon.

Children who did not know his background made fun of him. "Such a big boy and still in the first grade! Looks like their daddy, must be really dumbo." Joze felt embarrassed. He was overage for his class, but then he had to learn from the very beginning, from alphabets and numbers. The teachers were very nice to him. They knew how brave and well behaved he was. They paid special attention to him and arranged extra coaching for him. Joze was intelligent. He was a fast learner. In one year he managed to finish what was usually taught in two years in grades one and two. All the teachers were happy to see his progress.

In the second year of his school, he felt more comfortable as he was not far behind his age group. He was in the third grade now. Didi made extra efforts to see that Joze was not teased and harassed by other children. Everybody listened to Didi. She never scolded them but through stories and poems taught them that one should work honestly. Joze had learned to read and write Marathi and English within two years. He also enjoyed Arithmetic. But the subject he enjoyed the most was History. When Didi narrated stories of great kings and brave nobles who sacrificed everything for their motherland, Joze listened with rapt attention.

The story of Abraham Lincoln who came from a poor family and was not ashamed of cutting wood, was Joze's favourite. Didi taught them that no work or profession was bad or mean, but one should do it honestly. This impressed Joze and he continued helping his father at the sea before and after the school hours. Sometimes his friends laughed at him when they saw him dressed only in a loin cloth helping his father at the sea. At the same time they could not help admiring



Joze had learned to read and write
Marathi and English within two years

him when they saw him diving and swimming in the sea without a trace of fear. Though they were all in the same age group, most of them could not even swim. In the beginning Joze felt very upset when his friends made fun of him. But when they came to him and said, "Joze, get us the big sea shell" or "Joze can you get me a star fish for my collection?" he would dive deep into the sea and would come out with sea shell for them. At that time he felt very proud. Slowly he made many friends at school.

But Didi remained his best friend.

One day their science teacher brought some shells and weeds to the class.

"Do you know what are these?" She asked showing them the greenish velvety stems. None spoke.

"Nobody knows?" She asked.

"They are sea weeds and are found in the little rock pools, near the sea shore" Joze replied confidently.

"You are absolutely right Joze, well done! But how did you know about them?" The teacher asked.

"Madam, I got lots of them and quite a variety too. My friend Sahiba had told a lot about them" Joze explained.

"Will you show them to me? We can make a small aquarium and museum at our school. Will you bring them?" asked the teacher.

Joze hesitated. He did not want to part with his treasure. He had collected it lovingly and wished to show it to his 'Sahiba'. He did not know what to say.

Noticing his hesitation, the teacher assured, "We will not take them from you if you don't want to give them to our school. But you can at least show them to all children?"

Before Joze could reply the bell rang and everyone

rushed out for their games period.

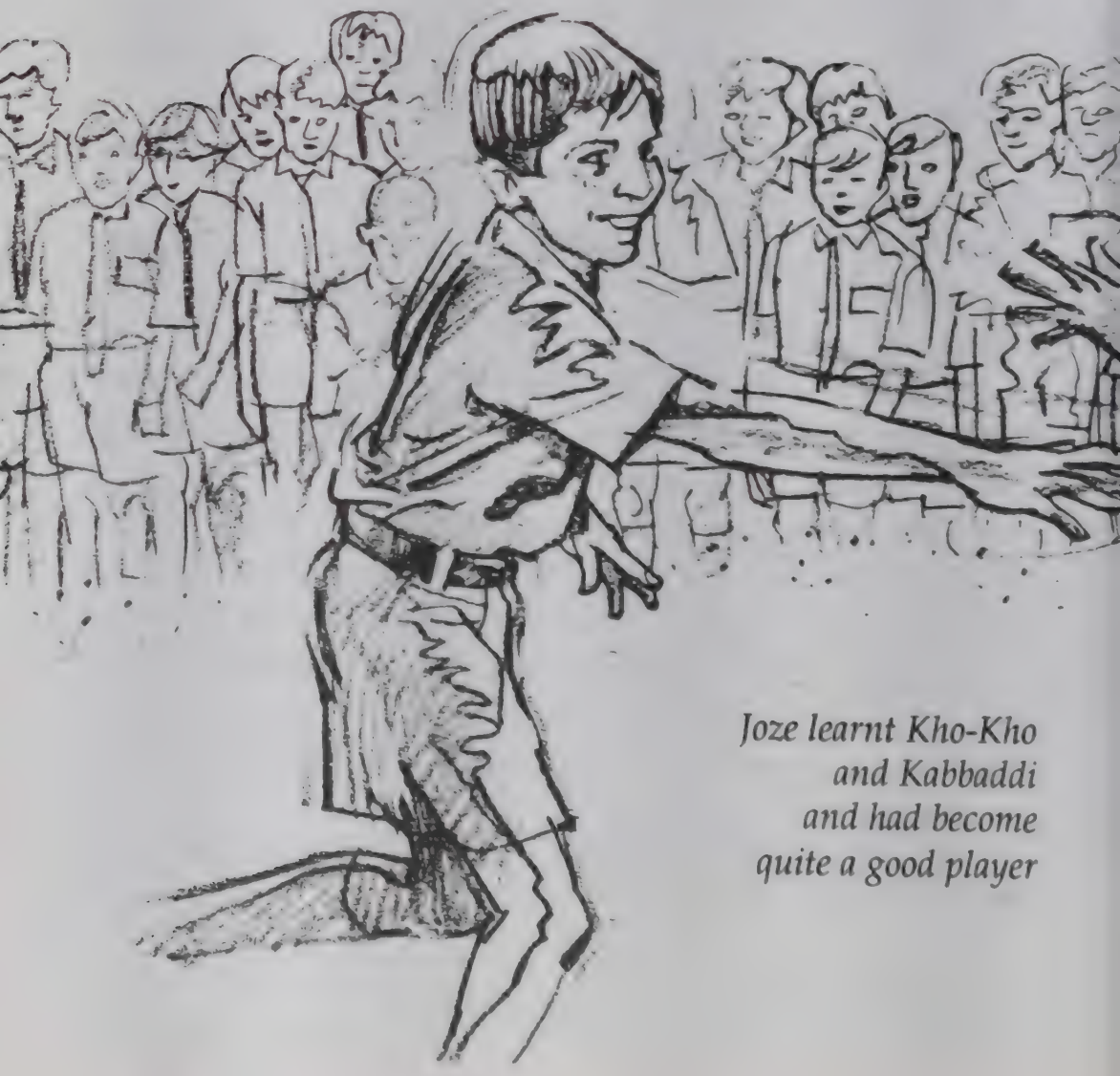
Joze was a good swimmer but he couldn't play other games. As in studies, Didi encouraged him in sports too. It was because of the encouragement he got from her that he learnt *Kho-Kho* and *Kabbaddi* and had become quite a good player.

One day when he came to school, Gopu asked, "O Joze, will you also go to the carnival?" These days everybody was excited about the carnival, the most important festival of Goa.

"I don't go. I have never seen it," Joze told them.

"What! You have never been to the carnival?" Ashok was surprised.

"O! You must go. It's such fun. The big king Momo



Joze learnt Kho-Kho and Kabbaddi and had become quite a good player

coming in the procession with all his knights and his beautiful queen. They dance and sing. And after that there is a grand fire work and good things to eat," Ashok went on.

"But I can't. My Mai and Pai and none of our neighbours have ever gone there. But after listening to you, I wish I could go," Joze said dreamingly.

"Joze I will take you," Didi said.

"Really Didi?" There were stars in his eyes. But immediately he realised and said "No, I should not trouble you so much".

"No trouble, I am going in my brother's car and you can easily squeeze in." Didi assured him.

AT THE CARNIVAL

Joze had no trouble getting his parents' permission. He was ready by the time Didi arrived in the car. After two hours of drive, they reached Didi's friend's place to see the procession from their balcony. There was a lot of excitement around. The streets were crowded. People had come dressed in their best clothes. The excitement reached its climax as the carnival procession started. Groups of singers and dancers followed. *Age Pori* sang the boys dressed up in black suits and felt hats while girls wore beautiful flowers in their hair and swayed their colourful skirts. The audience clapped to rhythm.

Then came the other group of dancers doing the *Dhekni*, a folk dance of Goa, followed by yet another dancing group. One after another dancers came adding colours and rhythm.

Joze was thrilled to see the procession of the dancers singing and dancing with such joy. As the tempo rose, everybody in the audience clapped and swayed to the rhythm. As soon as the arrival of the king was announced, all heads turned to a big float which brought the king Momo and the Queen. The king was wearing a gorgeous brown satin gown with golden embroidery while the queen was in a pink dress with silver embroidery. Both wore crowns. The King was carrying a golden staff in his hand. Suddenly somebody from the crowd cried, "Down with the Portuguese dictator!

Down with Salazar! Portuguese go back, long live mother India, long live Gandhiji, long live Nehru!" Many people joined and the whole place echoed with slogans "long live mother India" and *Bharat Mata Ki Jai*! The soldiers tried to locate the slogan shouting people and there was stampede. Joze could see people running for safety. Suddenly Joze bent forward and cried out "Sahiba, Sahiba!"

Didi pulled him back, as Joze climbed the balcony to jump down

"Didi let me go. I saw Sahiba. Look, he is there!" Joze pointed out. Didi looked in that direction. A tall man with a goatee beard waved back

"Look, he is calling me!" Joze tried to free himself.

"Are you sure he is your Sahiba?"

"Yes of course. By God, he is my Sahiba," Joze said as he crossed his heart.

"How could it be? He is the famous..." Didi checked herself in time because others were listening and looking down. She asked Joze, "How do you know him?"

"Sahiba is my best friend. He is the one who told me so many things about shells, conches, fishes. He even gave me 'dog whalk' for my treasure. He had promised he would come to see my treasure. He has come. I must meet him," Joze insisted.

"How could it be?" Didi wondered. "How a freedom fighter, Mangesh Pai, her cousin, could be Joze's friend Sahiba? He had gone underground. The Portuguese police were trying their best to get him. But like a clever fox, he ditched them every time. He was a legend by now. All freedom loving people of Goa hero-worshipped him. And here was this little kid Joze swearing that Sahiba was his best friend. He must have come to organise something there, and

met Joze." Didi reasoned.

"What are you thinking Didi? I am telling you the truth. Please let me go. I want him to see my treasure. I must go and catch him." Joze tried to free himself.

"You can meet him. But not now. If he is your friend he must know that you go to the beach every morning. He will meet you there tomorrow," Didi assured.

"You cannot trace him now in this crowd, can you? Look, what is happening in the streets," Didi reasoned.

Instead of creating order, the Portuguese soldiers pushed people by force and even beat some with their batons. Joze, Didi and her people were safe as they were sitting on the balcony of their friend's house. After some time things quietened down. But the pleasure had gone out of the carnival. Didi and her friends were worried. They did try to enjoy their food and brought some balloons for Joze, while Didi's friend packed some sweets for his parents. On their way back, Joze asked Didi "Why were those soldiers beating up people when they shouted "Long live mother India?"

Didi explained. "Our Goa is still ruled by the Portuguese. We are not free though the rest of India is. The Portuguese do not want to leave Goa and go back to their country and let Goa be free and become a part of India. So we are cut off from the rest of our brothers and sisters."

"Didi, when did the Portuguese come to India and why?" Asked Joze.

"On 7 July 1447 Vasco da Gama stepped on the Goan soil. At that time India was a rich country and attracted foreign traders. These merchants traded in spices, textiles, jewellery and handicraft. Goa had the added advantage of being a port and that provided good access to sea for trading. To strengthen their position

and ensure safety of their wealth, they started keeping armies. Whenever they found local rulers weak they conquered them. In course of time they captured a considerable part of the territory."

"Didn't Goans fight back?" Mohan Bhai asked.

"They did. But had to surrender before a disciplined and well equipped Portuguese army. Thus Khema Saunto gave Perne, Bicholim and Sattari under the treaty of 29 January 1788."

"In 1791, the king of Sundem gave up Ponda, Quepem, Canacona, Sanguem," informed Didi.

"Didi, you mean to say that no Goan king or people could withstand the onslaught of the Portuguese might?" Joze wanted to know.

"Of course they did. Our Goan people too have been fighting for freedom for many years. In fact, right form 17th century, when the Portuguese controlled the major part of Goa, there were armed revolts in parts like Sattari, where the Ranes never allowed the Portuguese to consolidate their position".

"I remember reading about Rane's revolts in the history book," Mohan Bhai said.

"Not only Ranes, there were many others who stood up against the dictatorial and oppressive rule of the Portuguese. Two well known priests Daytan Fransisco and Antonio Gonsalves went to Portugal to represent people's grievances. But there was no response. They realised, freedom from the Portuguese regime was the only answer to their problems. They were supported by many priests, religious leaders and even soldiers. Father Pinto took the lead in planning revolt against the Portuguese. The plan was revealed by the treacherous officer, Antonio Toshkanu. The Governor ordered armed action. Forty-seven people,

including seventeen priests and five army officers were arrested and given rigorous punishment. This was known as Pinto's revolt or conspiracy," told Didi.

"That must have shaken the Portuguese regime," Mohan Bhai remarked.

"It did," said Didi and continued, "this revolt was followed by another one staged by Bernando D'Silva, who was appointed prefect by the king of Portugal."

"What about Rane's revolt?" asked Joze .

"Those uprisings were a continuous process. One such uprising was led by Deepajee Rane. The Portuguese had started interfering in personal and social lives of people. 'Men must wear trousers and women a particular type of blouse if they wish to come out in the big or small towns.' This ordinance angered people. The Portuguese also broke their promise to keep up the rights and powers of Ranes. They took over the land and properties of Ranes. Angry Deepajee Rane attacked Portuguese forts and drove them out of Ponda, Bicholim, Kankon. The Governor came with a big force to capture Deepajee. But he had to face humiliating defeat. It made people proud and confident," Didi added.

"Bravo!" shouted Joze.

"The revolt continued for three years from 1852 to 1855. Ultimately the Portuguese Governor had to resign. A treaty was signed between the Portuguese and Deepajee Rane. A honourable title of 'captain' was bestowed on him."

"So Goans also fought like other brave Indians like Rani of Jhansi and others," remarked Joze.

"Yes around the same time the first war of independence started from Meerut and engulfed the northern and central India," informed Mohan Bhai.

"Didi, what happened in Goa after the revolt by Deepajee Rane?" Joze asked.

"As time passed Ranes and Goans realised that the Portuguese were not serious about their commitments. The treaty or agreement was only an excuse. Dada Rane rose in revolt in 1888 and again in 1912."

"Why didn't armed revolts continue after that, I wonder," said Mohan Bhaiya.

Dr. Lohia

"With the advent of Gandhiji, the resistance became non-violent. After the formation of the national congress of Goa under the leadership of Dr. Tristaode Brangaza Cunha in 1929, it became a real mass movement. Lots of other organisations were established by the freedom fighters of Goa. They held secret meetings and awakened people through *prabhat pheris* or morning processions and meetings and distributed pamphlets.

One such meeting was called by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia on 18 June 1946 at Margao. Accompanied by Dr. Julio Menezes, Dr. Lohia defied the Portuguese government by addressing a large gathering of people. Dr. Lohia had hardly begun when the administrator warned him. Dr. Lohia didn't pay heed. The administrator

pointed a pistol at him. People watched with baited breath. He brushed aside the pistol. Dr. Lohia and Dr. Menezes were arrested. Crowds joined them. Thousands of people were arrested. The streets of Margao resounded with slogans of *Bharat Mata ki Jai* and 'Dr. Lohia Zindabad!' The ground where Dr. Lohia held the meeting is now called the Lohia Maidan.

As India was almost on the threshold of freedom, the Portuguese government even employed foreign soldiers to curb the freedom movement."

"That was unfair," remarked Joze.

"They did not give up. The freedom fighters moved to Bombay. They decided to carry on their activities from there. For a few years things were quite. Probably freedom fighters were organising themselves. They were also frustrated as Nehru's attempts for peaceful solution were not showing any result."

"Why didn't freedom fighters act?" Joze asked.

"They did. On the night of 24 July 1954, the volunteers of United Front of Goans marched from Vapi in Gujarat into the Portuguese enclave of Dadra. They had few rifles with them. They captured Dadra. Lisbon protested to New Delhi."

"And then..?" asked Mohan.

"A few days later, on 2 August, volunteers of Azad Gomantak Dal infiltrated into Nagar Haveli. They liberated Naroli. From the other side, volunteers of Goan people's party, with the help of local Warli tribe attacked from the Nagar Haveli end, and completed the take over. More than 150 Portuguese soldiers were captured."

"It must have been fantastic! Isn't it Joze?" Mohan asked.

"Yes, it must have been. But what about Goa, Didi?" Joze asked.

"It kindled a new hope. There were many organisations active for Goan freedom."

"They all decided to work together. They formed Goa Action Committee. The committee decided to send batches of *Satyagrahis* into Goa. First batch was to enter Goa on 15 August 1954.

"The response was tremendous. Thousands of Goans and non-Goans came forward to march in Goa as *Satyagrahis*. Three entry points, Nangli, Band, and Redi were chosen. They marched peacefully, singing patriotic songs like *'chala pudhe, chala pudhe, Rou chala Panaji war vijayi Zende.'*

"At two points Portuguese soldiers stopped and arrested the *Satyagrahis*. But one batch managed to march upto 'Terekhol' and it occupied the fort. They hoisted the Indian National Flag. The next day the Portuguese troops arrived at the fort. They fired at the peaceful Satyagrahis. One was killed and twelve people were injured. Many more were arrested.

"This incident sent waves of anger and resentment among Goans as well as non-Goans."

"All the political parties of India were unhappy. They decided to send Indian *Satyagrahis* to Goa, Daman and Diu."

"I do remember Didi. A large number of *Satyagrahis* , old and young, men and women, had entered Goa on 15 August 1955," said Mohan.

"Yes. It was a spontaneous response of an angry, sensitive people, that made a housewife like Sudha Tai Joshi face the batons and bullets of Portuguese soldiers. Many were killed, hundreds were wounded. Leaders including Sudhatai Joshi, N.G. Gore and Madhu Limaye, were imprisoned".

"That was really cruel," remarked Joze.

"Indeed it was. Therefore to avoid such cruelty, the borders with India were sealed," added Didi.

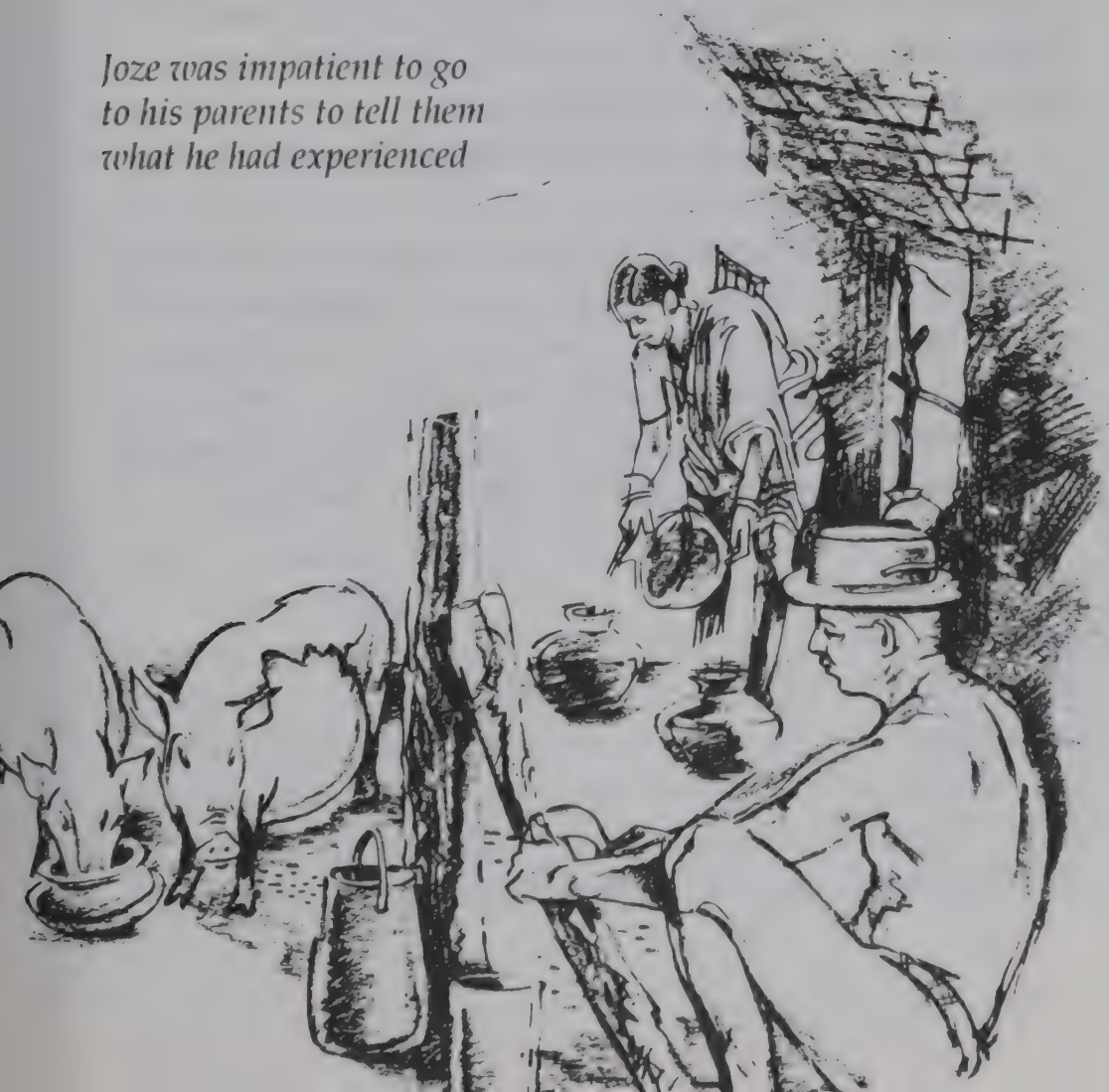
"Will that solve the problem? How long can they keep us under them?" asked Mohan.

"Not very long, I hope. Already international opinion is against Portugal's hold on Goa. They will have to leave." Didi was positive.

"The other day I heard on the Voice of Freedom radio that a National convention for the Liberation of Goa, Daman and Diu was held in Delhi. Delegates from Japan, Brazil, Spain, USA, UK and USSR attended it. I hope the Government of India was more active," remarked Mohan.

"It certainly is. Didn't you read that Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru had declared at Bombay that, "the coercive

Joze was impatient to go to his parents to tell them what he had experienced



measures of the Portuguese government had forced us to think of some other ways to solve the problem. And Goa will soon be free."

"O Didi, I hope they act soon. How I wish I could help," little Joze exclaimed.

"You little fellow will fight the mighty Portuguese? I am sure you did not even understand what Didi was explaining. Didi, I think you have wasted your efforts," Mohan Bhai teased Joze.

"No, I understood perfectly. Didi, I really did. And I will help to free Goa, just as I helped Gopu to come out from the sea," declared Joze.

"I Know you will, my brave little boy," Didi hugged Joze.

"Here we are back to our homes." Mohan stopped the car. Joze jumped out. "Thank you Didi, Thank you Mohan Bhai." He was impatient to go to his parents to tell them what he had experienced.

"Sweet little Kid," Didi remarked seeing Joze run towards his house.

Didi had become very fond of Joze. She took him with her to the village fair and to her people at Panjim or Margao many times. Joze too adored Didi and brought flowers and beautiful sea-shells for her. Joze's parents respected Didi and were very happy to see the progress their son had made under her guidance.

ONE MORE DREAM

Joze was up at the crack of dawn the next morning. He sneaked out, running towards the beach. He did not want to miss Sahiba in case he came early. It was still dark, but Joze was not scared. This was his beach. He knew it like the palm of his hand. The cool sand under his feet, little crabs that tickled and the occasional frog that leaped on his feet were very familiar.

The sound of waves, singing birds and swaying palms, all were his friends. They greeted him every morning. Today he had no time for them nor was he interested in looking for new shells or conches for his collection. He looked at the far end as far as he could, to spot Sahiba. But there was no sign of him.

He reached his treasure. "Let me check it before Sahiba comes," he told himself. He climbed the boat, and removed the plank. He couldn't see much in semi-darkness, but he knew that every shell and conch was in its proper place. He put back the plank and came out. He walked further down.

There was not a soul in sight. He sat on the anchored boat for some time. The dark sky was gradually turning light orange. He felt cheated as he walked back. Suddenly he saw some figures. He ran towards them but they were fisher-folks. Sahiba was not one of them. Now he felt angry at Sahiba, "Why didn't he come when he is here?" He had promised that

Why shouldn't I kill this 'Kulli'?

he would come to meet him whenever he was in town. Even Didi said the same. But where is he? How can he break his promise? Just then a little crab jumped on his feet. He stumped with anger.

"Why shouldn't I kill this 'kulli'? Why should I listen to Sahiba, when he doesn't keep his promise?" Joze shouted.

"Joze, Joze, where are you? Don't you want to go to school?" Maria was calling him.

Joze ran to the hut. He didn't want to miss his school. At prayer time, he stood silent. "Why were you not singing Joze?" the class teacher asked him.

"I did."

"I didn't see your lips moving."

"I did it silently in my mind," Joze explained.

"Is something wrong, Joze?" she asked

"I am fine, I am fine," Joze said hurriedly and started taking out his books.

In the recess, he didn't join others on the play ground. He sat alone under a tree. It was there that Shyama Didi found him.

"What is troubling, you Joze? Is something wrong at home?" she asked.

"No."

"Then why are you in such a bad mood? Your class teacher was worried."

Joze could not keep anything from Didi. He cried, "Sahiba broke his promise. He didn't come to meet me. I waited for him at the beach since the dawn."

"O Joze, he must be busy, or he may have left Goa. He is a busy man. He has to travel a lot. I am sure the day he gets time he will surely visit you." Didi tried to reason with him. Joze thought for a while and got up. He wiped his face. "I am sorry, I upset everyone, Mai at

home, class teacher and you Didi in the school."

"Now be a good boy and play. You should not get upset. You are a grown up boy now. You must go on collecting for your treasure and don't forget to study well. Your exams are just a month away," said Didi.

"Yes Didi. I will study hard. Didi, can I do two years study in one, this year too?" Joze was his enthusiastic self again.

"Look, already it is February end. How can you finish the course of the fourth grade in one month?" Didi doubted.

"I can. I am already ahead of the class. I can borrow the books for the 4th grade from Gopu or Ashok. O! But they will need them for their exams," Joze realised.

"What you can do is to study them in summer holidays. You will have all afternoons free. And when the school opens in June, we can see if you can be tested and promoted to 5th grade. But tell me, why are you in such a hurry?" Didi asked.

"I want to be in the same class as others of my age. Then Gopu and Ashok will be with me, and Madhav will not be able to make fun of me as he does now. He calls me Daddy of the Class. And you will be my teacher then."

"We will see. Now, have you eaten something? Did you get something from home?"

Joze did not reply.

"Here, eat these bananas. I knew you didn't. Come on. Take these," Didi insisted.

Joze ate the bananas without further fuss.

As the month of March approached, the atmosphere in the school became studious. Everyone was engrossed in the preparations for their annual examinations. Joze too was studying hard. He went to

the beach to help his father in the mornings, at other times he was engrossed in his books. Maria had to call him several times to eat his food.

One day she had made special "hooman", a fish curry with green mangoes and coconut milk. That was Joze's favourite.

The dinner was getting cold, but Joze did not come to eat. Maria lost her patience and shouted, "Joze if you don't come immediately I will throw away all your books into the sea."

"How could you say such a thing, Mai? Books are Gods. Would you throw Bible into the sea?" asked Joze with tears in his eyes.

"You woman, why are you disturbing that child?. You puff like a proud peahen when people come with their official papers to get them read by our Joze. Apart from Padri or father De mello, he is the only one in our neighbourhood who can read. And now, can't you wait for a few minutes and let him complete his study?", said his father.

"I am worried about his health. Can't you see how thin he has become since he started school? But you both won't understand a mother's worry. Would you? You can only shout at me. It's fine with me. I will not utter a word. I will only cook and eat whenever you two want to," Maria marched out angrily with tears in her eyes. Joze followed her. "Mai, I know you love me. But I have to study hard so that I can go to the 5th class like other children of my age. Don't be angry. I promise I will eat properly and whenever you call. Please come. I can't eat unless you are there. You know that," he hugged her and wiped her tears.

"O, *mazo mogacho chedo*" Maria embraced Joze and kissed him. There were no more quarrels over dinners.

"Mai, Pai look,
I stood first in the class."

Days passed quickly, Exams began and were over in a week. Joze came home shouting "Mai, Pai, look, I got so many books and prizes. I stood first in the class."

Neighbours crowded the hut. "Pedro, you must give us all 'pheni'. Your chedo has come first," said Francis.

"Yes Pedro Sahiba, you must," others joined too.

"No, no drinking in my hut, not in here with Joze and other kids around," Maria objected.

Men folk went to their usual pub. Women and children too dispersed after they saw prizes and books.

"Chedo, what will you do with so many books now that your exams are over?" Maria asked as she tidied the place.

"Exams are over Mai, but I want to study during the holidays."

"Study in holidays? You will go to school even in holidays? What for?" Maria asked.

"Mai, don't you want me to be in the same class as the other boys of my age? Then nobody will be able to say that your son is dumbo."

"Why would they call such a fine boy who stood first in the class, dumbo?" she asked.

"Because I am older than other children in my class. If I study in holidays then I too will be in 5th grade, with other boys and girls of same age. And Didi will be my teacher. Won't that be great? I always dream of studying in Didi's class. And if I pass Didi will be proud too." Joze explained.

"Didi already loves you. And yes, it will be nice if you can study in her class," Maria agreed. "God bless you."

"And, Mai, Didi promised that during holidays, I can go to her house and study there. But of course I will

be studying in our own house. I will not trouble her. I will remain at home most of the time. You can feed me as much as you want. You will make prawn and mango pickles for me and then shout at me, won't you?" Joze teased her.

"O, yes. I have no other work but to shout at you." Maria was about to shout at him when she saw a mischievous smile on Joze's face and both started laughing.

They realised that the summer was over when one afternoon Maria shouted, "Joze, Joze, come quick and help me to pack *Sungate.*" Maria had put prawns in the sun to dry.

During the monsoon, when fishermen could not venture in the sea, dried fish came handy. They also fetch good price. Joze ran out. The sky was dark.

It was about to rain. Both of them worked like possessed. They had packed the last lot in the basket when big rain drops fell on Joze's nose and eyes. He picked up two baskets and ran inside the hut. Maria followed with other two packs. "That was fine work we did," commented Joze.

"Yes, and thank Jesus, otherwise all my efforts of two months would have been wasted. My God! Look at that rain."

"You must thank me for the quick work," Joze said as he watched the rains.

"The weather is just right for hot tea and onion *bhajees*! Don't you think so, Joze!" Pedro who had got up with the shouts of Maria and clouds, asked.

"I have no time to satisfy lazy man's request," Maria replied.

"But I helped you Mai. I packed up most of the dried fish for you. I deserve tea and *bhajees*, don't I?"

Joze picked up two baskets and ran inside the hut

asked Joze.

"All right. I will make it. Rains mean your school will start soon. And you will not be asking for afternoon tea and *bhajees*," Maria reminded.

"O yes, only four days left of holidays" exclaimed Joze.

He was thrilled at the thought. He could imagine Gopu and Ashok's surprise and specially Madhav's when they saw him in their class. He was confident of getting promotion. He had been to Didi twice during holidays to report about his progress. Her tips and guidance had helped him as usual.

Joze reported to the principal Mr. Sardesai. He asked Mr. Kamath to test Joze's progress in social sciences. Joze was well versed in history. He had also learnt geography as well with the help of an atlas. He got an 'excellent' for history and 'good' for geography.

In Marathi and English languages he managed to get 'good' and 'satisfactory' respectively. Mathematics was no problem for him. Didi had seen to it that he knew the tables perfectly and Mohan Bhai had drilled him in oral maths.

"Is permitted to enrol in grade V," the principal wrote on his certificate. Joze caught Didi before she entered the class the next morning. He stood outside the classroom. The class stood up and shouted, "*Namaskar*, Madam."

"*Namaskar*. Sit down." Didi opened her register and started taking the roll call 'Abhinav'.

"Yes Madam." She went on calling the names—Asha, Ashok, Bhaskar, Chetan, Devaki, Dinanath, Gajanan, Gopal, Hari, Hema... Children got up one after another as their names were called and their presence marked. Didi paused for two seconds and called 'Joze'.

"Yes Madam," Joze answered entering the class. Everybody turned to him. They were stunned. "Joze in our class?"

"Yes. Joze has been promoted to your class. Yesterday he gave the test for the 5th grade." Didi explained.

"O Gosh! How and when did you study?"

"During holidays," Joze said matter-of -factly.

"O! that's great," Gopu said with genuine happiness. "Madam, let Joze sit next to me please," he requested.

"If everybody agrees, I have no objection," said Didi.

"The saviour and the one who was saved! Let them be together," commented Madhav in his sarcastic way.

Gopu and Joze ignored him as they sat together. Didi started teaching.

One more dream of Joze had become a reality!

CLEVER FOX

Joze was happy to be in the 5th grade. Gopu had become his best friend, but to others he talked very little. He had so much to catch up. And so much to read. The library was his favourite place. Mr. Chitnis who was the librarian, guided him. He read books by Sane Guruji, 'Dukhhi', 'God Goshti', 'Shyam Chi Aai' and others. He identified with Shyam immediately. Shyam had to face hardships like him. The locale of 'Konkan' was the same as Goa – the sea, the palms, mango and jack fruit trees. As he read the book he felt he was in his own place. After reading the books, his behaviour with his parents became more understanding and respectful. He realised how much they denied themselves to give him the best they could.

He absolutely adored 'Gotya'. His cricket match episode, his attempt at drama made him laugh, while Gotya and Suma's gesture of sharing their Diwali delicacies with poor children, touched him. After reading Abraham Lincoln's biography he felt proud that he too was the son of an ordinary fisherman and determined to achieve his goals like him. After reading biographies of Gandhiji and Ambedkar he knew why Mr. Chitnis recommended them.

As they were studying 'Maratha' period of Indian History in the class, Joze borrowed historical novels like 'Ushakal' by H.N. Apte, and 'Raigarh', 'Pratapgarh' by

Babasaheb Purandare. He wished he could see all those forts where gorilla battles were fought. Books made school interesting during rainy days.

Didi made teaching fun by narrating stories from epics and history. She also told them many tales associated with festivals. Didi told them of *Rakhi Poornima*. She narrated them the story of the Mughal King Humayun and the Rajput queen, who asked for his help by sending 'Rakhee' and, like a true brother, Humayun rushed to protect the queen and rescued her kingdom from the enemy.

"But Didi, why don't we celebrate this festival?" asked Joze.

"We do, but not as Rakhi Purnima. We call it 'Narli Poonam," she replied.

"Oh, Yes! and on that day we offer coconut and flower to the sea and in the evening, when the full moon comes up fisher folks dance on the beach. The old Remo narrates the story of sea dragon and beautiful girl before the dance." Joze informed.

"And what's that story? I have never heard it. Why don't you tell it Joze!" requested Didi.

"I can't tell it like you or the old Remo," Joze hesitated.

"Just tell the way you can," Didi insisted. Joze began, "There was a beautiful girl called Isabel. She was a daughter of fisherman Antony. She loved her father and the sea. The dragon who lived in the sea loved her like his daughter. He used to give her beautiful shells to play with. He gave her white shining pearls to wear. Whenever she walked on the beach the sea dragon made soft waves to touch her delicate feet. He kept strong winds, roaring waves away from her. He protected her.

"But people felt jealous of her and her father. They

hatched a plot. One evening they mixed sedatives in Antony's pheni and led him to the sea. In an intoxicated state Isabel's father Antony walked right into the sea and disappeared. When Isabel heard the news she ran to the sea. In spite of all warnings she rushed into the water and she too disappeared. When the sea dragon came to know about it, he was furious. He fumed and roared. The sea was frightened. He rumbled and screamed raising waves as high as mountains. Fish began to die. No fisherman dared to go in the sea. Life was in danger. Fishermen did not go in for their daily catch. There was no fish to eat or to sell.

"They were miserable. They went to Paul, the wise old man. He advised them to apologize to the sea dragon. "Pray to him. Pacify him. Save the sea, fish and fishermen."

"Fisher folks, men and women, old and young went near the sea and prayed for days. They offered flowers and coconuts.

"At last the dragon was Pacified after the sea God requested him to forgive them. The dragon agreed. It was the 'Narli Poonam'. People thanked him and danced with joy. Whenever the months of monsoon come, the dragon remembers his lovely Isabel and again he flares up. His anger results in rumbling of the sea and rising of waves. He is calmed only when the coconuts and flowers are offered to him."

"That's why on 'Narli Poonam' fishermen throw the coconut in the sea," Didi commented.

"Yes, then they dance and then only fishermen venture in the sea." Joze completed the story.

"What a beautiful story!" Vandana exclaimed.

"Yes. And Joze told it beautifully too." Gopu added.

"O, I didn't tell it as beautifully as old Remo does.

You must hear it from him," said Joze.

"Oh, that can be only next year as Rakhi Poonam is just over," said Dinkar.

"But now 'Ganesh Chaturthi' is round the corner. Isn't there any story about it?" asked Joze.

"There are plenty. Joze you must come to our house on 'Ganesh Chaturthi' to hear them." Gopu invited him.

"How can I?" asked Joze.

"Why not?" questioned Gopu.

"I don't know where your house is."

"Don't give excuses Joze. I can show you my house today itself," Gopu said.

"But Gopu your parents may not...."

"They are very eager to meet you. I have told them about you. Promise you will come." Gopu made him promise.

Didi guessed why Joze was hesitating. The evening before the 'Ganesh Chaturthi' she went to Joze's house. "Here is a gift for you Joze," said Didi as she gave him the new set of clothes she had brought.

"But why? I can't accept gifts just like that."

"It is our custom to give gift of new clothes to dear ones," said Didi.

"I know you are making up," Joze said.

"No. I am telling you the truth. I too got new saree from my brother Mohan Bhai. You know him. I will be wearing that tomorrow." Noticing Joze's doubt she added, "You can verify from Gopu tomorrow. He too will be in a new dress. So tomorrow you must come in this new dress." Didi made him promise.

When Joze reached Gopu's house, he found the door open. He hesitated to go in.

"You must be Joze, come in." A tall gentleman invited him in. He was dressed in white dhoti, a silk

shirt, and white turban with golden border.

"Gopu, Gopu," he called out.

Gopu rushed in exclaiming "O Joze! I am so glad you are here."

"Baba, he is my friend Joze who...."

"Friend is enough," Joze interrupted.

"I guessed it right, didn't I Joze? We have already met. Now take him in," said Baba. They entered the big hall. Joze was stunned by the beautiful decoration around Ganesha. There were flowers and colourful Rangoli. The Ganesh was smiling. His one hand raised to bless his devotees and the other he held the 'Modakam'. While his upper hands held a trishul and Lotus flower.

Joze stood admiring. He did not know what he was supposed to do. He felt embarrassed. Just then a smiling lady entered the hall and said "We are glad you have come Joze."

"Gopu, give him some *prasad* and then go to your room."

"This is my Mai." Gopu introduced.

"Aai give us lots of *prasad* and some *chiwda,*" said Gopu. They went to Gopu's room upstairs with their plates. Joze was zapped by the size and 'decor' of the room. There were huge photographs of Tilak, Gandhiji, Subhash Chandra Bose. "Isn't that 'Rani of Jhansi?" Joze said as he looked at the other wall. He suddenly stood still.

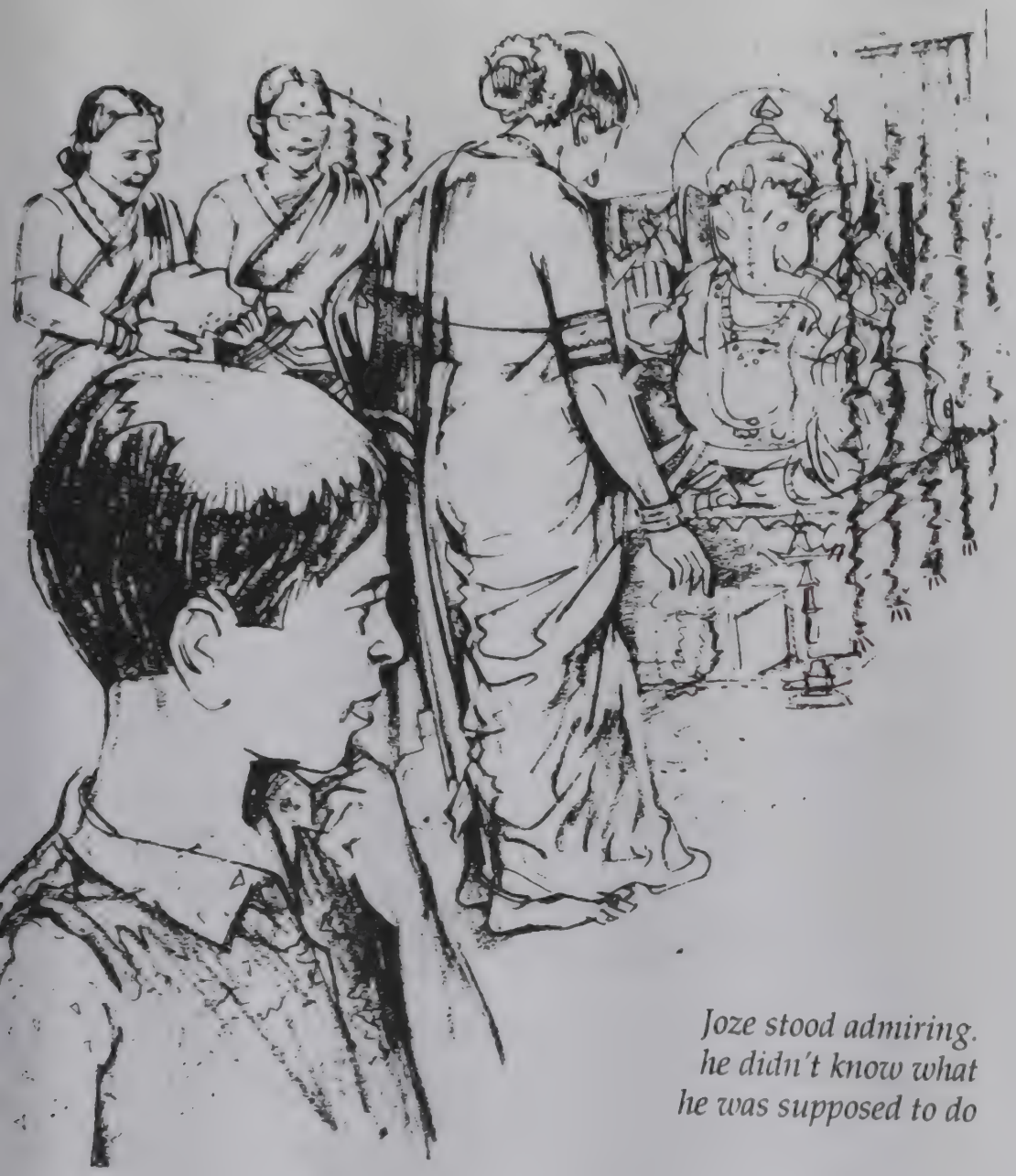
"What's the matter Joze?" asked Gopu.

"How do you have my Sahiba's photo?" Joze questioned.

"Your Sahiba?" Gopu asked in surprise.

"Yes, my friend Sahiba!" Joze exclaimed.

"He is my elder brother, Dada."



Joze stood admiring. he didn't know what he was supposed to do

"It can't be. How could he be?" Joze said

"Why can't he be?" Gopal.

"I don't believe it," Joze repeated unbelievingly.

"You have to. But how do you know him?" asked Gopu.

"He is my friend who told me so many things about sea shells, fish, and gave me the rare 'dog's whalk'. He promised to come back and see my collection.

But now I don't know."

"You don't know what, Joze?" asked Didi as she entered.

"Didi, he doesn't believe that this person in the photograph is my Dada." Gopu said.

"Joze, Gopu is telling the truth," Didi said.

"Then he must be staying here. Why didn't he then come to see me?" Joze complained.

"Because he doesn't stay here anymore. He is fighting for the freedom of Goa. So he has to travel," Didi explained.

"He is the well-known freedom fighter Mangesh Pai whom the Portuguese Police call 'The Clever Fox."

"He was there in that crowd shouting 'Vande Mataram', 'Portuguese go back' at the carnival wasn't he?" Joze asked.

"Yes, he was. But then he had to disappear as the police was on his trail. Even now they are," said Didi.

"Then how could Dada come today? Aai and Baba are looking forward to seeing him. He is always here on 'Chaturthi."

"If he is not able to make it, all of us will be disappointed. How I wish he comes." Gopu said.

"He has come," came a voice.

"Dada! Gopu rushed to him. "Dada, this is Joze, who saved me and is now my close friend."

"I know him. He is my little friend from the beach and I am his."

"Sahiba!" Joze shouted with Joy.

"How did you manage to come?" asked Didi

"Don't ask me how. But I don't know how I can get out of this place," Mangesh Pai looked worried.

"You are the Clever Fox, Sahiba. Nothing is impossible for you!" exclaimed Joze..

"Yes, they do call me the 'Clever Fox'. But today the police have surrounded the house. There seems to be no escape."

"Don't loose hope. We can think of some way" said Didi.

"What can you think of! Our relatives and friends who used to come here have deserted us, no one will help," observed Sahiba.

"I will help," offered Joze.

"How can you? You are just a boy Joze," Dada said.

"I have a plan," said Joze

"And what's that?" asked Gopu hopefully.

"Come close." The four of them huddled together. In the evening there was a big crowd in Gopu's place. There were men, women and children of all ages. The police didn't know what was happening

"What is happening?" asked one of the plain clothed policemen.

"There is going to be a dance and music programme in front of Ganesh. Don't you know?" answered one of them.

Just then, a group of children in fisher-folk dresses came in. Some had oars in their hands while others had musical instruments like drum and pipes.

"Begin chala." An elderly fisherman was rushing them inside. Within few minutes music began and children began dancing to the tune of *'Damuchya lagnak Vaita'* followed by *'Aage Pori'* and many other popular Goan folk songs.

Some of the policemen too entered to see. *Prasad* and other eatables were distributed. Entertainers left the house.

There was one extra person with them. But nobody noticed.

"Thank you Joze. Your plan was superb. Now you must go back to your parents."

"No Sahiba, you too must come and stay in our hut for the night." Joze insisted.

"No Joze. The police will definitely come to your locality, once they realise that I am not at home." Sahiba explained.

"Nobody from your locality knows about me until now. So they will not give any information. If I stay with you, they will suspect. So it is best you go back. I will meet you early morning on the beach to see your treasure and return this fisherman's clothes."

"No, please don't come. The police will be searching. I will not complain. I understand now. I only hope our Goa becomes free soon, and I meet you Clever Fox," Joze said.

"*Tathastu*' May it happen, O! Joze, But today this little fox proved cleverer," Sahiba hugged him and then walked away.

Joze stood till darkness enveloped Sahiba. Then he turned back.

THE SECRET PLAN

Joze was thrilled with the title 'cleverer little fox' given by his friend Sahiba. He felt now that he too was involved in the freedom struggle of Goa. He started visiting school library every day to read newspapers, specially 'Kesari' to know what was going on. He read that the international opinion favoured the attempts to free Goa from the Portuguese rule. They condemned Portugal for its colonial and dictatorial attitude.

The atmosphere in Goa was becoming tense. People were restless. Diwali came but it lacked the usual gaiety and glitter. The celebrations were subdued.

Joze visited Didi and Gopu. They served him Diwali delicacies. He relished them, but more than that, he enjoyed listening to the 'Voice of Freedom', an underground radio.

This radio station was established after the freedom fighters captured wireless sets in Dadra Nagar Haveli in 1954. Navelkar, a nationalist minded Bombay based Goan engineer, converted it into an effective transmitter. From 25 November 1954, 'Voice of Freedom' started broadcasting in Portuguese and Konkani. Easy availability of transistors and radio helped in carrying their messages to remotest areas of Goa. Voice of freedom kept people informed about all that was being done to free Goa. The fearless broadcasters which included young women like Libia Lobo Sardesai, kept

the station going through thick and thin.

They created awareness about Goa's freedom among people.

On Diwali day the radio reported that Portuguese officers and rich people were sending their women folk and children back to Lisbon.

"Didi, does that mean that Portugal is expecting some severe action by the Government of India to free Goa?" Mohan Bhai asked.

"May be. They must have realised that the government of India under the pressure of public opinion to free Goa from the Portuguese regime, will have to act," Didi answered.

"It is high time they did. Enough is enough," said Mohan Bhai.

"Any news of Sahiba the clever fox?" asked Joze.

"He is somewhere in Maharashtra or Karnataka. We just got a letter wishing us Happy Diwali," replied Gopu.

"And is there no date or postal stamp?" enquired Joze.

"It didn't come by post. It was delivered by one of the volunteers," said Didi.

"My God! These volunteers are really fearless and brave!" Mohan exclaimed.

"Only a fearless person can be a freedom fighter," Joze said emphatically.

"Then you can surely become one Joze," Gopu said.

"I wish I could be one," Joze replied.

"You did help on Ganesh Chathurthi day," said Didi.

"O, that was just giving a slip to the police. There was no bravery involved. I wish I get an opportunity to be a real freedom fighter," Jose said dreamily.

"You never know. You may get one and that too quite soon," teased Mohan Bhai.

The opportunity did come, not very soon, but quite early.

One evening in December, as Joze was on the beach inside his treasure boat checking his collection, he heard loud voices. He stood up to find out what it was about. He noticed four Portuguese soldiers coming towards his boat. He ducked in. For a fortnight the atmosphere had become very tense. Portuguese soldiers were seen roaming in the streets. They would take the best fishes from the fishermen and pay if they wished and whatever they wished. The fishermen were too scared to protest. They could not even go out of the village to sell their catch. Everyday rumours of fighting between the Indian army and Portuguese soldiers were heard. People wanted the Indian army to come and free them from the Portuguese regime. They waited for them anxiously.

People were disappointed when the expected action by Indian army did not materialize on 12 and 13 December. This expectation was raised by those who listened to the 'Voice of Freedom' radio. Similar news also filtered from the government side. Joze, Didi, Mohan Bhai and Gopu who listened to radio everyday, were sure that freedom was not too far, but it was time they were cautious and alert, all the same.

Therefore when Joze saw the four Portuguese soldiers he became suspicious. He wanted to find out what they were up to. Fortunately the soldiers came and sat near his treasure boat.

"Marcos, Freddy, I had just received the order that the Bridge of Borim must be blown."

"Why?" asked a nasal voice.

Joze whispered "you wait, man.
I will not let your plan succeed"

"Intelligence report say that Indian Army is on its way. They will enter from Belgaon and proceed towards Margao. While the other battalion may come from North and capture Panjim," said the commanding voice and added "by blowing up the bridge at Borim with dynamite, we can stop the army unit's progress towards Margao."

"The Indian soldiers are not fools. They certainly will inspect the bridge before they cross," the nasal voice commented.

"Don't I know that? We would connect the dynamites only after the Indian soldiers had inspected it. Understood?" It was the leader's voice again. "We know the area better than them. We will put the dynamite on 17th night. Then we will hide at different points on both sides of the bridge. All of you must dress like fishermen. Don't put on your uniforms, understood?"

"Yes Sir. But when will we connect the dynamites?" a gruffy voice asked.

"After Indian soldiers had inspected the bridge, I will give you a signal. After that you may connect the dynamites," replied the leader.

"One thing more, you must use minimum light. And no noise."

"As soon as the first file of Indian army is on the bridge we will ignite the dynamite," he added.

"By the time most of the Indian soldiers are on bridge, it will be blown up and bodies of Indian soldiers will be strewn all over the place," exclaimed nasal voice excitedly.

"A two birds in one stone, Ha ha!" laughed the gruffy voice.

Joze shuddered at the cruel laughter. He was very

angry. He stood up to jump out of the boat to grab the soldier.

"Hey, somebody is coming," the nasal voice, who probably heard Joze, remarked.

Joze quickly ducked in and whispered. "Just you wait, man. I will not let your plan succeed. I will save the Indian army, come what may." Joze clenched his fists with resolve. He sat quietly in the boat peeping out now and then till the soldiers were there. After a while, when they finished their bottles of 'Kajufeni' they got up to leave.

"John, we will be at our places tomorrow night by 10'o clock," said the soldier with the gruffy voice.

As soon as the soldiers were out of sight, Joze jumped out. "I must tell Didi about this," he thought and ran to Didi's house

The door was closed. Joze banged the door, "Didi, Didi, please open the door." He shouted breathlessly. Didi opened the door. She was surprised to see him at such a late hour. She feared that something terrible must have happened to Joze's father at sea.

"Joze what's the matter? I hope everybody is fine at home," Didi asked.

"Yes. Mai and Pai are fine. Let us go to some place where nobody can hear us. I want to tell you something serious and confidential," Joze almost dragged Didi.

"Follow me." Didi took Joze to a lonely corner in the verandah of her house. It was the far end at the back of the house where a number of coconut trees and bushes made it a very lonely place.

"Now tell me what is it?" said Didi.

"Didi, the life of the Indian soldiers coming towards Margao from Borim, is in danger." Joze blurted.

"In what way?" Didi asked.

"The Portuguese soldiers are planning to blow up the bridge at Borim as soon as the Indian soldiers march on it," Joze informed.

"How do you know? Who told you?" Didi asked

"I heard four Portuguese soldiers talking at the far end of the beach."

"What were you doing there?" Didi asked

"I was checking my collections as usual. They discussed their plan as nobody except me goes there." Joze told Didi.

"Tell me all the details."

Joze gave the detailed account of the conversation of the four soldiers.

"What can we do?" asked Didi.

"We must think of a way Didi, by which we can reach the army unit before they cross the bridge at midnight tomorrow" Joze said. They were thinking hard. To telephone them was out of question.

"We can ask someone to go to Margao," suggested Joze.

"Who? There is no one whom I can trust. Secondly there is a danger of his telling about it to his family or friends. That will put the Portuguese soldiers on alert," Didi expressed her fears.

"That means we must act on our own," said Joze.

"Yes. Let us take a bus to Raia tomorrow morning," said Didi.

"What will we do after that?" asked Joze.

"We will take a look at the bridge. Try to locate the likely points where they may connect the dynamites," Didi replied.

"First we will have to find out their hiding points."

"Yes you are right," said Didi. "Now run back, your Mai and Pai must be worried. I will come in the morning

to take you to Raia. Sleep well. We have a long day ahead." Didi patted Joze on the back before he left.

Though, she asked Joze to sleep well, Didi herself could not. She was thinking about the great risk involved. She admired Joze for his courage. She believed in his patriotism and his wish to help the army unit.

She had no doubt in Joze's ability but she was not sure, how they could reach the Indian army before the midnight tomorrow. She turned and rolled till sleep took over in the early hours of morning.

FREEDOM AT LAST!

Morning brought hope and made the determination stronger. Didi got ready quickly and proceeded to Joze's house. Joze was up earlier than usual. He was ready and pacing up and down. He had told his parents that Didi was taking him to her relatives. The moment he saw Didi coming he shouted "Mai! Didi is here. I am going."

"Wait a minute. I had made some cake for Didi and you. You can have it on the way." Maria brought the packet of cake.

"Mai, we don't want anything. You don't understand," Joze protested. He was tense.

"Why are you making a fuss today. You enjoy munching something during a journey. You only told me when you came back from the carnival," Maria reminded.

"That was different. Today's journey is not for..."

Just then Didi entered and asked "Are you ready Joze?"

"He is up and ready since dawn. But he is now making a fuss and refuses to take a cake which I have packed for your journey." Maria complained.

"How can we, Didi? Will we able to eat anything on the journey when we are going for...

"Joze. Don't argue with your Mai."

"We will feel hungry on the way. Do give that

packet, Maria. I will carry it in my bag. We will be back in two or three days. Don't worry even if we are late by a day or two," said Didi.

When they walked a little away fror the hut, Didi said "You should be careful. You almost revealed to your Mai the purpose of our journey."

"I am sorry, Didi. I felt irritated as she was delaying us." Joze reasoned.

"I understand Joze. You are very tense. But we must keep our cool and behave normally?"

"Right Didi," Joze agreed. By the time they reached the bus stop, it was almost 9.30 a.m.

"We will get the 10'o clock bus. You stand here. I will find which bus will take us to Raia," Didi told him.

The bus started on time. In half an hour they reached Margao. After stopping for ten minutes the bus started for Raia. It suddenly stopped with a jerk. Two fishermen banged on the door.

"Open the door!" they shouted in commanding voice.

"The bus doesn't stop here", the conductor replied.

"It will have to", another fisherman ordered in a nasal voice and pushed the conductor aside. Four fishermen entered.

"Didi," Joze nudged her.

"What is it Joze?"

"I think they are the ones".

"Are you sure?"

"*Awaige*," a voice came from the back. All heads were turned toward the direction of the voice. One of the rude fisherman had pushed a passenger from the seat.

"*Awaige*" one of them teased the poor passenger.

"–Ha, Ha," his friend laughed.

"Didi I am absolutely sure, now. That gruffy laugh

is the same," Joze whispered.

"The soldiers had given up their uniforms but could not give up their arrogance," Didi commented.

"Why isn't nobody protesting?" Joze asked.

"Nobody wants to get involved with thugs, especially now."

"I know these days the Portuguese police are beating people," Joze whispered.

"Let us not whisper too much lest they become suspicious," Didi cautioned.

"Instead let us eat some cake," Joze suggested.

"No, no. How can we? We will not be in a mood to eat. Isn't it?" teased Didi

'O Didi, don't tease." Joze then pulled the packet from Didi's hand bag.

They reached Raia, by afternoon. After having lunch in a small hotel, they walked towards the bridge at Borim. As they neared the bridge, they saw a number of policemen guarding it. Nobody was allowed to cross it. Even boats were not allowed to cross the river. To convey the message to the Indian army on the other side, posed a big problem. Joze was quick with his plan. He told Didi "I am a strong swimmer and I will swim across after the sun sets."

Didi did not agree. Joze asked her "What's the use of listening to your stories if I can't do anything for my motherland?"

Didi had no answer. She was in dilemma. She knew the risk involved. At the same time she herself had taught him and others to be courageous and had kindled the patriotic spirit in them. Secondly, there was no other way. Joze knew that Didi loved him and didn't want any harm come to him. He assured her "Don't worry. I would be able to do it."

"I know you will. But before you cross the river, we must locate the spots at which the dynamites may be placed. So let us do it." Didi Suggested.

"But Didi, the guards are everywhere. They will shoot us if they see us spying. We must think of some way, to locate those spots without being detected," said Joze.

"Stop!" "You can't go," the guard ordered.

"Fool don't you recognize us. We are not fishermen, but we are the Portuguese soldiers squad for special mission" the gruffy voice argued.

Didi and Joze hid behind the bush on the side of the bridge.

"No. We have no orders or message to allow any one," the guards argued.

"Don't you believe us? I am inspector John Rodrigue. I order you to let us go."

"No we will not." The heated arguments started. The guards from other side gathered to defend their colleagues.

"This is our chance Joze. Let us go down. So that we can look where these thugs will plant the dynamite." Didi and Joze rushed cautiously and climbed down the stairs. They were now under the bridge. There were thick bushes and cashewnut trees.

"Didi if we hide here, we can see both sides of the bridge." Joze tidied the place.

"*Begin yo,*" the commanding voice shouted. They saw four Portuguese soldiers in fishermen's clothes, coming down the stairs.

"I think we will put four dynamites on both sides and four in between," the nasal voiced soldier suggested.

They did their job fast. "Special Mission over.

They saw a number of policemen guarding the bridge

Now let's have some 'Kaju feni." The gruffy voice took out a bottle from his belt.

"No, not here, let us go to a restaurant," said the nasal voice.

"What about guarding these dynamites?" the commanding voice asked.

"No, need. The guards at the bridge do not allow anyone to approach," gruffy voice answered.

They climbed back.

"Joze, we will have to wait here until dark. Only then you can swim across," whispered Didi.

"We will wait, we had good lunch." Joze assured.

"I do have some cake left in the packet in my bag."

They waited silently. As the evening approached, the guards on the bridge started flashing torch lights to keep watch. The atmosphere looked eerie.

Didi took out a little torch from her purse and looked for time. "What's the time Didi?" asked Joze.

"It is 7.30."

"Didi, we must now go near the river. If I don't start for the other side I will be late."

"How long will it take Joze?" Didi's voice was trembling.

"Don't worry so much, Didi. I will be alright. If there are no hurdles, I will make it in one hour or so". Joze said.

"That means you will reach around 9 O' clock. The army unit will need some time to diffuse the dynamites."

"That's why I said I must start now, so that the task is completed before midnight" said Joze.

"Right Joze," said Didi.

They looked around. Silently they came out and walked towards the river. The beams of the torchlight helped them.

Suddenly Didi stumbled. "*Awaige*", (Oh! Mama) she said and then covered her mouth.

"Who is there?" the guard asked. Torch lights flashed from all sides. Didi and Joze lay flat on the ground.

After a while, when it was quiet they got up cautiously. "I am sorry Joze," whispered Didi.

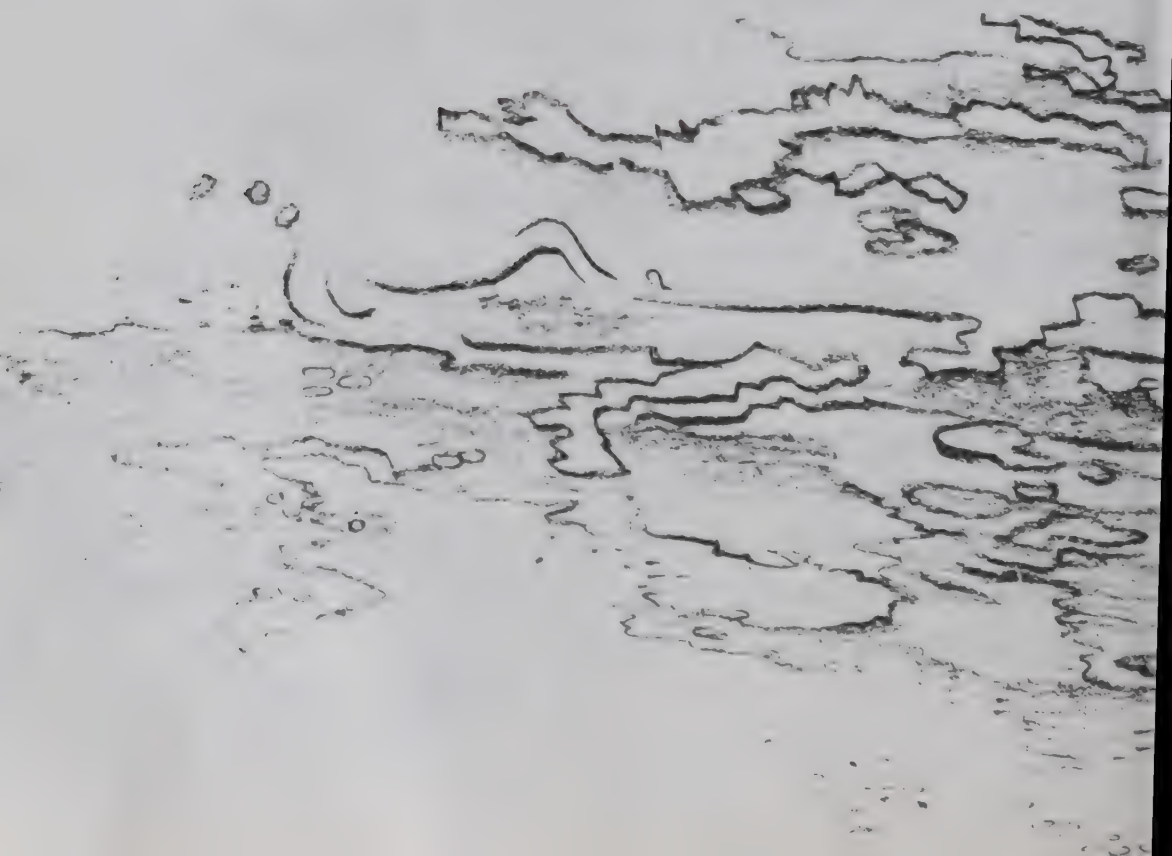
"It is alright. Have you hurt yourself?"

"No. I haven't. I can walk properly. Now let us hurry." They walked to and fro to select a spot to plunge into the river. Finally they chose the point at which the distance between the two banks of the river was narrowest.

"Didi, you must go back to Raia and wait for me in the same hotel," suggested Joze.

"Be careful Joze. If something happens to you..."

"Nothing will happen to me. Indian army is already here. You shouldn't worry. Don't forget, we are Clever Fox's little troop, and I am the cleverer little fox." Joze



said proudly.

"O, Joze. I am really proud of you," Didi hugged him. "May God be with you."

"Amen," said Joze and skilfully entered the water with minimum of noise or splash. But in the silent night even that was enough to attract the soldier's attention.

"Who goes there?" a threatening voice asked, from the bridge. Didi shuddered with fear, but sensing the danger she hid behind a tree. Joze knew all the tricks of swimming. He just floated, so that there was no movement in the water to detect him. When it was silent again, Didi went back to pray for her brave Joze.

Joze swam and swam. There seemed to be no end to swimming. When he was tired, he just floated to gain strength and after a while swam again. He was half way through when the light from the guard's torch spotted him.

"Somebody is there in the river," the guard shouted.

"Who goes there?" a threatening voice asked from the bri

Lots of torches flashed. Quickly Joze took a deep breath and went under water.

"Khai-re?" he could hear many voices. He used all his skill and breath to keep mum and underwater.

"Nare, nobody is there. Back to your position," the chief guard ordered. Joze came out for a breath and then again swam underwater. He adopted this technique for sometime. It was tiring but there was no alternative. The other bank came into sight after what seemed to be a long night swim. But Joze had made it in good time. When he reached the other bank he walked silently towards the Indian soldiers.

They were all ready to march and were waiting for the orders. He didn't know whom he should tell.

He shouted *"Raore; Raore!* Do not march on the bridge. The bridge is mined." But the soldiers did not hear him as his voice was very low after the exhausting swim. When he saw no response, he shouted again "Stop, don't go, bridge will phut." It was the only way he could manage to talk in English, and stood in front of the troops. When he appeared in front of them, the Indian soldiers were surprised to see a little fellow of ten or eleven years, clad only in a loin cloth, water dripping from his body. He was shouting at them but the soldiers of the 63rd battalion could not understand what he was saying. Again Joze shouted in Konkani, "Stop, don't go". Fortunately Havaldar Rane who knew Konkani, understood him. He went to Joze and asked him the reason for stopping them. Joze told him the whole story about the plan of the Portuguese soldiers and how he heard them and saw them putting dynamites under the bridge.

Havaldar Rane took Joze to his commander Lt. Col. Nanda and told him about Joze's story. Lt. Col.

Nanda would not believe Joze as his soldiers had inspected the bridge for any sabotage. Joze told him how he had heard the chief Portuguese soldier telling others to connect the dynamites only after they had made sure that the Indian soldiers had gone back after their inspection of the bridge.

"You send your soldiers with me and I will show you the places where the Portuguese soldiers will be connecting the dynamite," requested Joze. Havaldar Rane believed what Joze was saying.

"There is no harm in inspecting again, Sir," suggested Havaldar Rane and other officers too agreed.

In the end Lt. Col. Nanda agreed.

He ordered Indian commandoes to follow Joze. "If you find Portuguese soldiers, deal with them and give, all well signal after finishing your job," instructed the commanding officer.

Joze was familiar with the area and led the Indian soldiers to the points where Portuguese soldiers were to put the dynamites.

"There they are." Joze pointed at the Portuguese soldiers dressed as fishermen busy connecting dynamites. When they saw Indian soldiers coming, they ignited the dynamites and ran. The bridge blew up. Fortunately there was no casualty on Indian side.

Now there was the problem of crossing the river. When Col. Nanda and battalion learnt that the river was 546 meters wide, they admired the courage and strength of little Joze who swam across to save them. They patted him, Rane took him on his shoulders.

"Now what?" Lt. Col. asked. "We have to rush and find out the way to cross the river. If we can procure some barges, it will solve our problem." The commander said.

"Barge Mare. Haun sangtalo, you want barge. I will tell you how to get it." Joze told Havaldar Rane. Joze led them to the village people. People who had welcomed the army, took them to the company which owned the barge. After procuring the barge the whole battalion, along with Joze crossed the river.

People from Margao and other places were there to welcome them at the river bank near Raia.

They provided trucks and cars for the army to proceed to Margao.

"Joze, Joze," he heard Didi calling. She was trying to reach him through the crowd that had surrounded them.

"Please stop. My Didi is there, O please!" Joze requested. As soon as the truck stopped Joze jumped out and pushed through the crowd to hug Didi. "Didi, Didi I did it. I told you I can."

"Yes little 'Cleverer Fox', And I am so proud of you," exclaimed Didi.

"He is really a brave one," said Lt Col. Nanda who had followed Joze. "Please come with us to the town." Didi agreed. And they all went back to the truck. Their caravan rolled into Margao by afternoon. People were on the streets to greet the troops. *"Bharat Mata ki Jai. Jai Hind*! Long live Goan freedom!" rent the sky. The battalion had to move like a snail.

"Look, Sahiba is there Didi. Sahiba, Sahiba!" Joze shouted. He heard them and came near the truck.

"What are you two doing here?" he asked.

"But for them we wouldn't be alive," said Havaldar Rane. Didi then told about their mission. She then introduced Mangesh Pai to Lt. Col. Nanda.

"Col, I wish to give you a good news. The campaign Operation Vijay had been completed according to the

plan. The Indian Air force rendered Dabolim airport useless by bombing. Air Vice Marshal Pinto did go back for breakfast to Belgaom".

By the time they reached Lohia Maidan, the crowd had increased so much that no space was left unoccupied

"What about other regiments. Any idea?" asked Lt. Col. Nanda.

"The Voice of Freedom broadcast that inspite of the blown bridges 2nd Sikh Light infantry and para Punjab brigades managed to reach Panjim from different directions. The fort of Aguad had been taken over by the Indian Army as planned. The Governor fled from his office at Panjim as it is now controlled by the Indian Army." Sahiba reported.

"What about formal surrender?" Lt. Col. Nanda enquired.

"That too has been accomplished. They traced the Governor hiding in one of the barracks. He had signed the surrender document." Sahiba informed.

"Three cheers for the Indian Army!" Sahiba cheered. The battalion shouted, "*Jai Hind, Jai Indian Jawan, Bharat Mata Ki Jai*!" Everybody joined them.

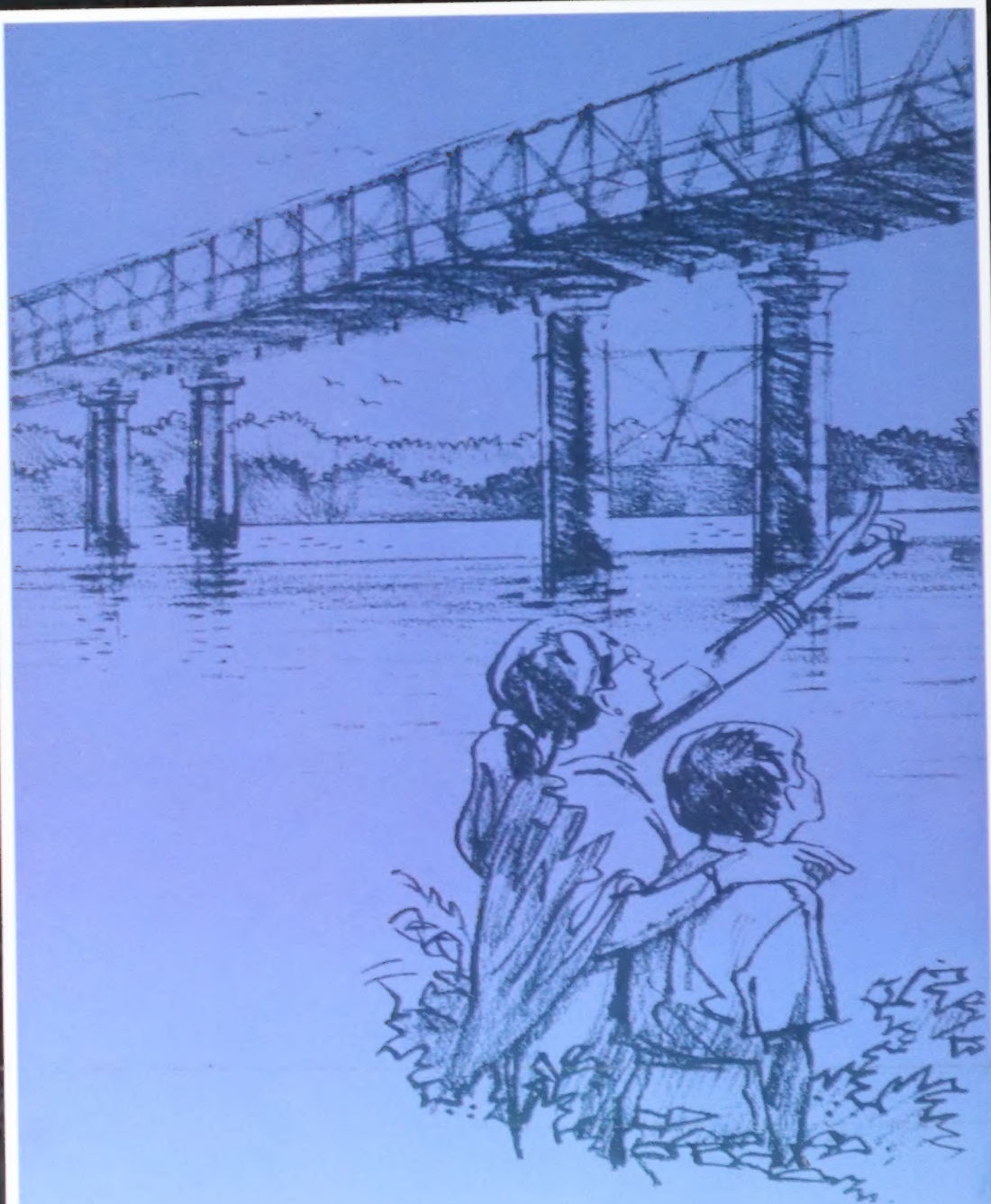
We must also say "Jai Joze!" Havaldar Rane suggested. "Certainly," agreed Lt. Col. Nanda and Sahiba.

Sahiba picked Joze on his shoulder as they said "Joze *Zindabad*!" The crowd joined them. The air was filled with the shouts of "Joze *Zindabad*!"

"No, not 'Joze'. '*Bharat Mata Zindabad*', 'Indian Army *Zindabad*!" Joze shouted back, and by the time they reached Lohia Maidan, the crowd had grown so big that no space was left unoccupied.

When Lt. Col. Nanda hoisted the Indian Flag, even the surrendered Portuguese soldiers joined in saluting and crying "*Jai Hind*!" The dream of all Goans had been realised. And the freedom of India was completed on 19 December 1961.

Printed at : Salasar Imaging Systems, B-69 Lawrence Road Indl. Area, Delhi-35



₹ 30.00
ISBN 81237268?-2
9 788123 726878
13141288

nbt.india
एकः सूते सकलम्

NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA